

# The Brethren Evangelist,

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.

S. J. HARRISON,  
S. H. BashorEditor  
Vice Editor.ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
J. M. Tombaugh I. D. Bowman  
C. Forney.

Address all communications for this office to Ashland, Ohio, and for the sake of convenience, make all drafts, express orders, etc., payable to S. J. Harrison.

The price of the *BRETHREN EVANGELIST* from June 1st to January 1st is 85 cents.

## OUR NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

This issue has a very strong flavor of Conference; but that is what we wanted. We want to "say our say" on this subject and then drop into routine work. We have not heard from all the brethren we had hoped; but what we have in the name of Christ we give unto you.

In this article we shall notice four things in relation to our conferences:

1. How often hold them?
2. When and where hold them?
3. Their scope and work.
4. Their organization.

Previously we have been an advocate of annual conferences. On this point we have changed. We see that our conferences are held so often that those who ought to attend them can not do so. Work done involving others' responsibility should be with their knowledge and consent: this it is impossible to have in their absence. Not only this; every poorly attended conference is a bad advertisement of the church.

FAR BETTER NO CONFERENCE than to hold them with small attendance.

While we were at Waterloo we did all in our power to secure a full attendance of delegates from all the churches at both our District and National conferences. We succeeded in getting a fair attendance. But none who attended the District conference attended the National. We were told frankly by all that they

### COULD NOT

attend both. If they went to the National conference they could not attend the District, and if they went to the District conference they could not attend the National.

### OUR REMEDY

then would be to hold the National conference and District conference bi-ennially and alternately. Then, it seems to us, we could safely expect a full and respectful attendance at both.

All District business needing adjustment could be attended to by the delegates at the National conference. One day at the National conferences should be given the Districts for organizing and disposing of district work

## 2. WHEN AND WHERE HOLD THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE?

They should be held as near the geographical center of the Brotherhood as suitable accommodations could be most conveniently and economically procured, and where there would be an opportunity of winning valuable territory to the church.

The presence of a large body of our ministers and representative members will be an influence towards building up our cause in any locality that can not be realized from any thing else. Therefore, in deciding where to hold our conferences this item should have its due weight.

The success of any conference will depend largely upon local influences. Therefore no conference should be held where there are not local agencies with both capacity and willingness to work for its welfare.

At present, so far as we know, there is no place which possesses so many advantages as Ashland. The Publishing House and College being here gives assurance of great local interest. They are as yet the only plants which the church owns and controls, and therefore within themselves would be an attraction to persons to come which no other place could offer. Because these institutions are here the church at large must have a greater interest in Ashland than in any other place; and if the holding of National conferences at any place are an element of strength to it then Ashland is entitled to the National conference so long as all the property she owns as a national church is located there.

But Ashland should not only have the conference on account of the property which the general church holds here; but because the convenience of rooms for meetings, and the facilities of the town for entertaining those who may attend. The accommodations which the College and Boarding hall afford could not be procured at any other central point for less than \$500, but here we can have it free of cost.

We think the time of holding the conference could be changed with great advantage in every way. We would suggest that it be the week after

### COMMENCEMENT.

Many will want to attend the "commencement exercises," and if the conference should be held on the following week, would remain for it. Not only this; but the principal part of the school would do so. Thus the work of the conference would be brought more prominently and favorably before the

minds of the students than it would be possible to do in any other way.

## 3. WHAT IS THE POWER AND SCOPE OF THE BRETHREN'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE?

This is a question which only the conference itself has authority to answer. So far as we know this has not yet been done. But it is a question of fundamental importance, and before one more item of business is taken up and discussed or passed upon it seems to us that the Conference should clearly define her scope and power.

At last conference were two brethren who appealed to it to sit as a court, and, if possible adjust difficulties existing between themselves and certain congregations of the church. Owing to the fact that a program committee was given full power to say what should and what should not come before conference, as well as when it should come, and that this committee did not consider it was within the scope of the conference to act in the capacity of an ecclesiastical court, these brethren's cases were not given a hearing. In our judgment the committee decided right. But suppose the committee had been composed of those who favor making a court of the conference, no rule of the conference would have debarred it. Suppose this year we should have a committee who would hold just the opposite views to the committee we had last year, and the same brethren should be here asking conference to investigate and decide upon their troubles, what would be the result?

While we believe there is a kind of tacit understanding that our conferences are in no sense whatever ecclesiastical courts their power and scope is very ambiguous to the average member. Even Bro. Holsinger seems to think that those who do not comply with the decisions of the National conference should be disciplined for insubordination; and we know he is not alone in this opinion.

As we said in the beginning of this article so we say again: Let our next National conference clearly define at its opening its full power and scope and then there will not be so much disappointment from its work.

We agree with Brother Rensch that our conference should be educational and spiritual rather than Commercial and Ecclesiastical. In fact we do not see how with Congregational government it is possible to make any thing else legitimately of them. Who that has joined the Brethren church has promised to hear either National or District conference?

We can agree at conferences on plans of work, but we cannot return to our congregations with any power or authority to coerce members into complying with such